

A

## REVIEW

OF THE

## STATE

OF THE

## BRITISH NATION.

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 Saturday, January 28. 1710.
 

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**A**ND who can help talking a little of Trade, when they see Petitions thronging into the *House of Commons*, so incongruous in themselves, so inconsistent with common Justice, and indeed with common Sense in Trade, that to me it seems, as if some Men had a Mind to see, whether the *House* knew when they were affronted.

To see Petitions to the *House*, of contradicting Natures, and some of self-contradicting Terms; Here they petition against Monopolies to destroy Trade, there they petition for Monopolies to preserve Trade; Here some petition for Power to prevent Fraud in Commerce, there to pre-

vent Trade it self, on Pretence of preventing Frauds in that Trade——And there Men petition to have the Power of Fraud taken out of every Man's Hand but their own.

I could perhaps give you a great many Instances of these Things, and make you merry with the ridiculous Conduct on both sides——But I'll content my self to begin only with the Petitions from sundry Places, for laying open, *Anglice*, destroying the Trade to *Africa*, and a most preposterous, not to say foolish, Petition of some People, for supplying the Colonies with *Negroes*, by laying open the Trade to *Africa*.

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It is not good indeed to promise too much before-hand ; but if, before I have done, I do not make those Proposals appear, *not unjust only*, but unreasonable, and perhaps ridiculous, I may capitulate to forfeit all the Right I shall claim to writing Sense, as long as I live.

Indeed, the Complaints against the *African* Company have had many specious Things in them, and much Struggle there was last Session about the main Question, Whether a Company with exclusive Privileges was necessary to preserve that Trade or no—But, to my great Wonderment, and which I own I thought strange, in so many wise Men, as appear'd on both sides at the Bar of the *House*, and abusing one another on both sides—As if it were one Half-penny Matter to the Question, whether both Sides were honest, or neither Side ; either of which might be true, and the Argument about the Trade stand just where it did before.

I think, both Sides agreed last Session, that the Trade to *Africa* was to be preserv'd, that it was essential to our Colonies to preserve them, and supply them with *Negro* Slaves, that it was essential to the Nation to keep it out of the Hands of the *French*—Then it was agreed, that this Trade could not be preserv'd without maintaining the *Ports* and *Factories* on the Coast of *Africa* : And the main Question should have been, Whether these could be preserv'd without an exclusive Company or no.

Much Shifting and Evading we had indeed about this Question—But in all that I ever read or heard of, that pretended to answer to the Question, I never yet saw one Thing like, or one Man that would undertake to say, that any solid Security could be given for preserving the Trade, but by an exclusive Company—Perhaps the Gentlemen, having had Time to consider of that Argument, may have found out some *Medium* in this weighty Part of the *Case*—and I should be glad to see it, that then we may pull down the Exclusive Men with some Shew of Reason, and with Safety to the Trade—But, Gentlemen, if you are so fond of pulling down the Company,

that you will pull down the Trade with them—HANDS OFF is the Word ; there the Nation will be against you, for the Trade is essentially necessary, and must be preserv'd.

Nor is it sufficient to say, Yes, we can secure the Trade, and we will undertake to secure the Trade : The Trade to *Africa* is of the last Consequence to *Britain*, and 'tis not enough to say You will ; but will You give solid, firm Securities to the Nation, that your Word shall be made Good ? — Without Security You say Nothing, the Nation must not be jested with, and so lose the Trade to *Africa*—This is the only Thing I urg'd last Year, and many a Time it was offer'd to the *House*, but no Reply has been yet made, no effectual Answer given, neither has any Man pretended to say, that the separate Traders to *Africa*, tho' form'd in a Company, such as they propos'd, could offer any Manner of Security to preserve the Trade ; and till they do, I doubt not, but the *House* will be very considerate in the Matter of laying open that Trade.

I have nothing to do with the Accusations or Recriminations on one side and t'other, which fill'd all their Pleadings last Year with so much *Billingsgate* Rhetorick—They brought a great many Witnesses on both sides, and great Pains they took to let the *House* see their Nakedness, and to have the Nation's Opinion, of whose Faces were blackest : For my part, I am for allowing all the Mismanagements, Violences, Frauds, Cruelties, &c. that are pretended on both sides, and the Consequences may be just, that both sides ought to be suppress'd, the Men may be us'd as the *House* pleases, and let the Guilty be punish'd and expos'd, let Servants betray their Masters, Hirelings eat their Bread, and throw their Wealth in the Face of them they got it by. But the TRADE, the TRADE ; this is the great Question before the *House*, what must be done with the TRADE ? And of this I say to all that object, Let them be great or small, few or many, show me a Way to secure and preserve the Trade to *Africa*, without an Exclusive Company, if you can. I confess, it



it is with some Reluctance that I mention this Affair at so great a Distance ; but near or remote, any Man may put this Question, and I humbly offer it in the View of the World, to all that raise Clamours at an Exclusive Company, and I importune them for an Answer, not to Me, but the *House of Commons*. Can ye, *Gentlemen*, secure the Trade to the Coast of *Africa*, that the Nation may not be bereav'd of it, our Neighbours possess it, and our Colonies be ruin'd for Want of it ?

If any Men will say they can secure it—It is also very easie for them to tell how ; if they know the Method, it is easie to lay it down—All that have attempted it yet, at least that I have seen, have shuffled off this Point ; they have supply'd it indeed with plentiful Raillery at the present Company, and much good Breeding was shown that Way, *Cujus Contrarium, &c.* But still this main Question has been left, no Champion of the separate Traders has ever yet made the Attempt ; None of the Gentlemen that pleaded at the Bar of the *House*, when in Committee came to this Point, (at least as I remember) for I would not wrong the Gentlemen ; no not the Right Honourable Commissioners of Trade in their Accounts—nor any that I have met with, have undertaken to speak of a Security to preserve the Trade.

They have spoke of Things, and propos'd Schemes, which MAY be a Security, IF and IF they succeed, and IF the separate Traders send so many Ships ; But, I must ever be allow'd to say, there is a manifest Difference between *May* and *Shall* ; What only *May* be, has a *May* not be always attending it—And if the Trade only may be secur'd, it may be lost ; and this, I humbly conceive, is a Risque the Nation ought not to run.

I see a great Number of Petitions for the laying open this Trade ; None of them, I presume, will add to it these Words, *In order effectually to destroy it, and lose it to the Nation*. But since that is a *Tacit* owning, it ought not to be lost—It is a most strange Thing to me, that not one Petition is presented to the *House*, that mentions the Securing the Trade to the Kingdom in general.

But really, *Gentlemen*, were I to petition the *House of Commons* against the *African* Company, I would do it plainly, That their *Honours* would be pleas'd to dissolve the said Company, and settle the Trade on such a Foot, as might effectually secure and preserve the Trade it self to the *British* Nation—And this would certainly be a Petition for a regulated Company with Exclusive Privileges—I am not concern'd at all in the Parties on either side, and am at too great a Distance to go far in the Quarrel—But thus far I cannot but say, In all I have seen already, I could see nothing but a tumultuous Hurry, running upon the Company, and railing at Mismanagements, which with Submission, is not one Word to the Purpose ; for if this Company has mismanag'd, punish them, dissolve them, do all that Justice requires with them ; but the main Argument stands firm—*Secure the Trade* ; let it not be lost to the Nation, let not the Colonies lose their Supplies of *Negroes*—Let not the publick Interest of *Britain* in Trade, sink—And that this can be secur'd without an Exclusive Company, I am ready to debate with any reasonable Man on Earth.

You may run down People by Clamour and Noise—But this Question is very short—The Trade must be secur'd, or it must not ; All agree, the first is absolutely necessary : Either it can be secur'd by an open free Trade, or it cannot ; *If it can*, 'tis strange, not one Man has undertaken yet to tell us how ; for my part I am in Hopes, and have long been waiting to see it attempted ; to see one Man at least among the many so florid Opposers of the Company, offer at it—And when it comes, as sure it must one Time or other, if they expect the *House* should joyn with them ; I say, when it comes, I shall say more to it.

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